

## BI Testimony for Select Committee on Accountability

My name is Rosanna R. Alvarado, a member of St. Jude Catholic Church, and a fourth grade teacher at Mitzi Bond Elementary School with EPISD. I have taught at the elementary level for 5 years and 2 years at the university level. I am also a wife and mother to three children, one of whom is a special needs child.

I strongly believe in assessments to measure progress and accountability for students as well as teachers. I am not convinced the TAKS test is the ideal instrument for all students. If we as teachers are asked to tailor instruction to make all students successful, then I believe our assessment tool should demonstrate the same flexibility.

Students with special needs encounter difficulty and stress when taking the TAKS. Dyslexic students have the accommodation for reading and math to have questions and proper nouns read to them.

In the writing TAKS test, they do not have any accommodations or modifications. They are asked to write a passage as well as read several passages to identify grammatical errors. The dyslexic child does not view things in the same light as a regular ed. child and I believe this assessment is cruel and unjust.

This past year was the first time the state administered TAKS Accommodated and TAKS Modified. The students at my campus did not have sample practice tests as other regular ed. students did to prepare for the TAKS test. Thus, the students with the greatest need had the least resources. Their teachers read the test to them or had them take the practice tests independently causing anxiety and frustration for many students.

My son was to take TAKS for Math and have it orally administered to him. The difference between the TAKS and his test was the elimination of 8 field test

questions. He was mentally exhausted and had a headache the entire day. He was convinced he had failed and kept apologizing to me for not doing well.

I repeatedly consoled him and asked him if he tried his best. His answer was "yes" and I informed him that that was all I was ever going to ask of him and that I was proud of what he had achieved. I hugged and kissed him. In my heart I contemplated whether my words were touching his heart or if his defeated ego had been overcome him for the moment. Later, I was informed the regular TAKS test had been administered to him in error. After many apologies I was asked if I wanted the TAKS scored or voided.

Then, I had the task of motivating my son in less than 24 hours for the regular TAKS test in Reading. I do not know if the state realizes that these assessments are not only knowledge assessment tools but endurance tests. I do not feel it is appropriate to assess endurance. It can be completely exhausting for some students to take their tests back to back. In fourth grade the Writing Test is taken in February and then Reading and Math are taken in April, one after the other. I believe they should separate them and have one in March, preferably Reading.

The state would like to develop payment incentives to teachers and administrators for successful scores with TAKS. I do not believe this is appropriate. At my campus we are highly motivated teachers, students, and parents. In reality, there are some students who need additional help and may not have parental support or are economically challenged. Some teachers volunteer to tutor only to be told there is no funding. Some teachers volunteer their time while some are unable to make this sacrifice. My concern is that we are being measured and yet we are not being given the resources we need to be successful.